

Father's Life in His Own Words - Part 35

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Republished by International HQ Mission Office December 10, 2021



Refugees on the road to Hungnam 1950

Suffering in Pyongyang Prison and Hungnam Labor Camp

Imprisonment in Pyongyang and then at Hungnam special labor camp

Even while I was being led away in shackles for incarceration in Pyongyang Prison, I was promised by the spirit world that I would meet certain people there. In other words, I was promised, "If you go there, you will meet people who are like Jesus' three disciples." If this were not so, it would not be in accord with heavenly laws that govern the realm of fortune and restoration. That is why even the path of shackles and imprisonment can be the path of the greatest hope. In other words, I actually went to prison with hope and expectation. I knew, "I will meet such and such a person." I did not go to prison in despair. Since I went to prison with such a hope, at the prison I made my own way, and through the merit of that hard labor I enabled that door to be opened naturally. To do this, I had to make a total indemnity condition. I knew that while I was living in prison I had to become a sacrificial offering. This is why I took on the most difficult tasks while I was there.

Whenever I was incarcerated, I was very good at making friends with the most senior prisoner in the cell. I only had to speak a few words to him, and we would be friends. I would sit down with him and analyze for him the psychology of each person in the cell. Oh, this person's face is shaped like this, so he will become like this. That person's face is shaped like that, so this is what will happen to him, and so on. He may not have liked what I said, but he knew I was right. If I watch the senior prisoner's face and talk to him for a week - or even just three days - I am at the point where I can say anything to him. If I am sitting in the lowest position in the cell, where there is not much space, he moves me to a higher position. The head prisoner tells me to move up. Even if I refuse, he insists that I move to a higher position. I can make friends with anyone and make anyone my companion.

When you're in prison, each day of the year you can find all the material you need to write a long novel. Sometimes, you may hear the sound of someone playing a flute, and you can sing to that melody. Then everyone in that environment joins in. Whatever situation you find yourself in, you need to be able to find a place to tie your rope around and travel back and forth. That is how you become a man who leaves his mark on history.

My primary opponent visits

While I was in prison, a person who had been my enemy visited in order to apologize to me. Deciding whether to meet him was a test for me. This was the man primarily responsible for putting me in jail. The person who had played the lead role in the effort to put me in jail just suddenly appeared one day. In the moment that I came face to face with him, it was not a good feeling for me. I pretended not to recognize him, and said, "I'm afraid I don't know who you are." I looked into his eyes. In the past, he'd had a vicious and evil look, but his eyes had softened and he stood in front of me looking very much like a human being. He told me he'd done certain things and asked me to forget all that had transpired in the past. He asked me not to think badly of him for visiting me in prison.



Hungnam on the map

When he left, he gave me some food he had bought for me. Was I going to eat that, or not? That was a problem for me. In a place like prison, food is very valuable. I received the food around lunchtime but kept it until evening, because I had to think hard about what I was going to do with it. Without having discovered the principle of love, it would be impossible to accept that kind of food. After thinking about it very seriously, I decided to share the food with others.

In addition to everything else, this man was a Communist Party official. He was part of what was called the Security Cadre, and he must have considered that I might make him lose face in the presence of the prison guards. I could see he had a future, and I thought very seriously about his situation even though we were enemies. I could see that if he could leave with a heart-to-heart relationship with me, he would be someone who could meet me again in the future, someone who might find a new life. I still think about him in this way. On many occasions, I felt lonely in that prison. He came to me at a time when I was lonely and gave me comfort, and I never forgot that.

Hungnam's Bon-goong Special Labor Camp

I remember May 20, all those decades ago. It was on that day that, after being jailed in the Pyongyang Internal Affairs Station and tried, I was transferred to a prison in Hungnam.[\[1\]](#)

I had wept with anger many times over having been beaten and unjustly treated. I felt ashamed to think of Heaven and I tried to hide my face and my body. That is why, when I was taken to prison, I asked to be handcuffed to a murderer. I became friends with him.

We were shackled all the way to Hungnam, and it took us seventeen hours to get there. What do you suppose I thought about in the railroad car on the way there? It was an outrageous situation. If it seemed outrageous to me, think how mortifying it must have been for God. My determination grew as I watched the scenery go by outside the train window. Can you imagine how serious I felt as I watched those mountains and meadows go by? If I had been by myself, it would have been easy to escape, but I was shackled to the worst criminal. Incredible things that went through my mind during that trip.

On the way to Hungnam, there was a time when we were deep in the mountains, walking along a path that followed a creek. I still remember how we followed that winding road through a mountain valley. Each step I took represented a new start toward a new world. How was I going to live in the prison? I knew it would be difficult, but I was determined to go. It was a good opportunity for me to come to new realizations about myself.

The moment I entered the prison, I felt it was necessary in order to bring about a result that would allow us to transition from Satan's world to God's world. I decided that even in that environment, I would not reveal who I was and I would not allow myself to change externally or internally.

Forced labor in the fertilizer plant

June 21. That was the day I entered that prison in 1948. I went to that North Korean Communist Party prison and engaged in hard labor for two years and eight months, working in the fertilizer factory.



Loading the fertilizer onto a ship; the fertilizer factory was run by a Japanese company during the 1930s when this photo and the one below were taken.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution, many Russians experienced forced labor. Communist ideology does not permit any property-owning class or anti-communist elements to exist. In their hearts, they would like to kill all these opponents, but because of world opinion they can't do this. So the Communist Party collects these people, imposes forced labor on them and waits for them to die from it. I was in a forced labor camp in North Korea. Kim I Sung took a lesson from the Soviet experience and gave all his prisoners three years of hard labor. He left them to die.



An inside view of the Chosun Nitrogen Fertilizer Company's Hungnam plant

Morning inspection and a long walk

In the morning, when it was time to go to work, all the prisoners would be taken out of their cells. The prisoners would assemble in a field, where they would be checked for any contraband items. There was a body check.

Work began at 9:00 am, and there was a four-kilometer trip to the site, which took an hour to an hour and twenty minutes. Add to that the time it took to eat a meal, and it would all take two hours. To be able to start work at nine o'clock, we would normally wake up at half past four. In that situation, when a man would sit down, he would feel dizzy and his head would begin to spin. He would try to stand but wouldn't be able to.

Sometimes the morning inspection would take two hours, and it felt as though the cold were carving off pieces of flesh from our bodies. We felt a lot more freedom when we were working. When the wind blew in from the ocean in Hungnam, it would carry tiny pebbles. That wind that constantly buffeted us really seemed like an enemy. It was so cold; one couldn't help but shiver and shout out. No matter how hard a person tried not to make a noise, it was no use. My way of fighting the cold and overcoming it in that situation was to think to myself, Make it colder. Make it colder. Make it colder!

[1] It appears that Father spent time in two different prison camps in Hungnam; one of these, Bon-goong camp, he entered May 20, another that Father mentions later on this page he was apparently moved to on June 21. Both prisons served the fertilizer plant.